

QUESTION OF MAKING A COVENANT  
Taught by Willis E. Bishop

(From Study of Ezekiel)

In making a covenant, the Hebrew says "cut a covenant." That word "cut" refers to a sacrifice. Turn to Genesis 15:1: After these things, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision saying, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your great reward." And Abram said, "Lord God, what will You give to me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus."

Until he was a hundred years old Abram and Sarah had no child, and he was concerned about that.

In verse 3: And Abram said, "Lo, You have given me no offspring, or seed, and behold, a son of my house is my heir."

In other words, Eliezer, whom he had apparently picked up in Damascus on his way to the promised land, would have inherited Abram's rights. A childless man could adopt one of his male servants to be the heir of his estate, and that apparently is what would have happened if Abram had not had a son.

Verse 4: And behold, the word of the Lord came to him saying. "This one shall not be your heir, but one who shall come from your own body shall be your heir." Then He [God] brought him [Abram] outside and said, "Look now toward the heavens and count the stars if you are able to number them. So shall your seed be." And Abram believed in the Lord and God accounted it to him for righteousness.

And God said to him, "I am the Lord who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldees to give you this land to inherit it." And he said, "My Lord God, by what shall I know that I will inherit it?" And God said to him, "Take for me a three-year-old heifer and a three-year-old female goat and three-year-old ram and a turtledove and a young pigeon." And he took all these for him and divided them in the middle and placed each piece opposite the other, but he did not divide the birds [they were too small to be divided]....

Verse 12: And it came to pass when the sun was going down a deep sleep fell upon Abram, and behold, a terror and a great darkness fell upon him. And God said to Abram, "Know certainly that your descendants [or your seed] will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs, will serve them, and they shall afflict them four hundred years [a prophecy of the time spent in Egypt]. And also the nation whom they serve will I judge and afterwards they shall come out with great possessions. And you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age [175 years old]. And in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full."

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And it came to pass when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, a smoking oven and a burning torch [or torch of fire] passed between these pieces. On that day the Lord made [or cut] a covenant with Abram, saying ...."

Then follows what is involved in that covenant.

Making a covenant meant to "cut a covenant." When two men wanted to make a covenant [agreement or contract], they took animals and divided them. Then they passed between the pieces and met in the center, thus sealing the covenant, and making the agreement or contract binding on both parties. In this case, Abram was asleep and God passed all the way through between the pieces. This covenant did not depend upon Abram at all but totally on God. In Ezekiel, many times covenants were made in this same way. They made a sacrifice and on that basis agreed upon what they would do.

In reading through the prophetic books you must notice whether the covenant is between God and the people or between one person and another. Here you have the king of Judah breaking his covenant with the king of Babylon. In other cases God promised something to His people which depended upon their obedience, and the people broke the covenant with God and He brought judgment upon them.

Later on God promises a new covenant, which is a wonderful provision for the future with regard to Israel.

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